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ART. X. — CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *Historical Sketches of the Old Painters.* By the Author of "Three Experiments of Living." Boston : Hilliard, Gray, & Co. 1838. 16mo. pp. 296.

IN the course of our critical labors, it has rarely been our lot to meet with a more agreeable volume than the present. A work on artists could not be more appropriately dedicated, than to Washington Allston ; — a man whom future generations will rank in the same order of genius with the great Italian masters ; whose residence will throw a poetic interest, even over the dull scenes of Cambridgeport, for the lovers of art, in all coming time.

The little book contains sketches of the lives of painters, beginning with Apelles and Protogenes, and ending with Claude Gelée, commonly known as Claude Lorraine. They are written in a most genial spirit, and with a delicate appreciation of the several peculiarities of genius in the artists commemorated. Fact and fiction are blended with much taste and skill ; and the stories are all told in a style remarkable at once for simplicity, beauty, and grace. A cultivated literary taste, and a ready perception of the refining and exalting beauties of art, are manifested on every page. Such books cannot be too cordially welcomed among us. The riches of intellectual attainment, and the graces of accomplishment in the fine arts, ought to exercise through the press a greater influence over the yet forming character of the national mind. We have among us capacity enough, knowledge enough, and taste enough ; but capacity, knowledge, and taste, are too exclusively confined to the circles of private society, which they enrich and adorn ; while they only contribute, indirectly, to the formation of a just taste in the public.

The little poems, scattered through this volume, are marked by great delicacy of expression and harmony of numbers.

We take the following passage from the sketch of Raphael.

"It was necessary for him to reside at his native place for a number of months. During that time, he painted several fine pictures. His heart, however, yearned for Florence, and he returned to it once more with the determination of making it his home. With far different sensations did he a second time enter the city of beauty. The freshness of his gayety was blighted ; lessons of earthly disappointment were ever present to his mind, and he returned to it with the resolute purpose of devoting himself to serious occupation.

"How well he fulfilled this resolution all Italy can bear witness. From this time he adopted what has been called his *second manner*. He painted for the Duke of Urbino the beautiful picture of the Saviour at sunrise, with the morning light cast over a face resplendent with divinity; the flowers glittering with dew, the two disciples beyond, still buried in slumber, at the time when the Saviour turns his eyes upon them with that tender and sorrowful exclamation, — 'Could ye not watch one hour?'

"Raphael enriched the city of Florence with his works. When asked what had suggested some of the beautiful combinations of his paintings, he said, 'They came to me in my sleep.' At other times, he called them '*visions*'; and then again said, they were the result of '*una certa idea che mi viene alla mente*.' It was this power of drawing from the deep wells of his own mind, that gave such character, originality, and freshness to his works. He found that power *within*, which so many seek, and seek in vain, *without*.

"At the age of twenty-five, Raphael was summoned by the Pope to paint the chambers of the Vatican. The famous frescos of the Vatican need neither enumeration nor description; the world is their judge and their eulogist.

"No artist ever consecrated his works more by his affections than Raphael. The same hallowed influence of the heart gave an inexpressible charm to Coreggio's, afterwards. One of Raphael's friends said to him, on looking upon particular figures in his groups, 'You have transmitted to posterity your own likeness.'

"'See you nothing beyond that?' replied the artist.

"'I see,' said the critic, 'the deep blue eye, and the long fair hair parted on the forehead.'

"'Observe,' said Raphael, 'the feminine softness of expression, the beautiful harmony of thought and feeling. When I take my pencil for high and noble purposes, the spirit of my mother hovers over me. It is her countenance, not my own, of which you trace the resemblance.'

"This expression is always observable in his Madonnas. His portraits of the *Fornarina* are widely different. Raphael, in his last and most excellent style, united what was graceful and exquisite in Lionardo, with the sublime and noble manner of Michelangelo. It is the privilege and glory of genius to appropriate to itself whatever is noble and true. The region of thought is thus made a common ground for all, and one master mind becomes a reservoir for the present and future times.

"When Raphael was invited to Rome by Pope Julius the Second, Michelangelo was at the height of his glory; his character tended to inspire awe rather than affection; he delighted in the majestic and the terrible. In boldness of conception and grandeur of design, he surpassed Lionardo, but never could reach the sweetness and gentleness of his figures. Even his children lose something of their infantine beauty, and look mature; his women are commanding and lofty; his men of gigantic proportions. His painting, like his sculpture, is remarkable for anatomical exactness, and perfect expression of the muscles. For this union of magnificence and sublimity, it was necessary to prepare the mind; the first view was almost terrific, and it was

by degrees that his mighty works produced their designed effect. Raphael, while he felt all the greatness of the Florentine, conceived that there might be something more like nature,—something that should be harmonious, sweet, and flowing,—that should convey the idea of intellectual rather than of external majesty. Without yielding any of the correctness of science, he avoided harshness, and imitated antiquity in uniting grace and elegance with a strict observation of science and of the rules of art.

"It was with surprise that Michelangelo beheld in the youthful Raphael a rival artist; nor did he receive this truth meekly; he treated him with coldness and distance. In the mean time Raphael went on with his works; he completed the frescos of the Vatican,* and designed the cartoons.† He also produced those exquisite paintings in oil which seem the perfection of human art.

"Human affection is necessary to awaken the sympathy of human beings; and Raphael, in learning how to portray it, had found the way to the heart. In mere grandeur of invention he was surpassed by Michelangelo. Titian excelled him in coloring, and Coreggio in the beautiful gradation of tone; but Raphael knew how to paint the soul; in this he stood alone. This was the great secret of a power which seemed to operate like magic. In his paintings there is something which makes music on the chords of every heart; for they are the expression of a mind attuned to nature, and find answering sympathies in the universal soul.

"While Michelangelo was exalted with the epic grandeur of his own Dante, Raphael presented the most finished scenes of dramatic life, and might be compared to the immortal Shakspeare,—scenes of spiritual beauty, of devotion, and of pastoral simplicity, yet uniting a classic elegance which the poet does not possess. Buonarotti was the wonder of Italy, and Raphael became its idol."—pp. 132–137.

In the notice of Apelles and Protogenes, we find the following; "'How does it (Rhodes) compare with thy native Cos?' said Protogenes, as they walked, arm and arm, back to his dwelling," &c. Will the author excuse us if we doubt whether this is exactly in keeping? Did antique gentlemen walk *arm in arm*, like the moderns? or is that convenient and sociable, but not very picturesque fashion, an invention of later ages? We observe, in the account of the Caracci school, the expression, "he was compelled to leave, and went to Rome." This use of the verb "to leave," though not uncommon in this

"* These are the celebrated works which have been so much visited, admired, and imitated for more than three centuries. They are tolerably preserved; but are said to have been much injured by the fires of the German soldiers, who used these rooms as their barracks, in the sack of Rome by Charles the Fifth's generals, soon after Raphael's death.

"† Where Raphael's cartoons are spoken of, certain paintings on paper are meant, which he executed as patterns for tapestry, to be used in the Procession of Corpus Domini at Rome. It is believed that they were carried into England from the Low Countries, where they were sent to be executed in tapestry. The tapestries are annually exhibited at Rome.

country, is incorrect, and unauthorized by good usage. It should be "to leave the city."

2. — *Homeward Bound, or the Chase. A Tale of the Sea.* By the Author of "The Pilot," "The Spy," &c. In Two Volumes. Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, & Blanchard. 12mo.

THE recent productions of Mr. Cooper have added nothing to his own reputation, or to the stores of American literature. He has set up for a master of the elegances of life, and has discoursed learnedly, through volume after volume, upon the arbitrary refinements of fashionable society. Professing to be a sturdy republican, he has exhausted his powers of invective upon the manners and characters of his countrymen, who are, taking his own descriptions for truth, ignorant of the first principles of social refinement, and no better than a nation of brutes and savages. If such are the friends of Republicanism, she may well pray Heaven to save her from them. Mr. Cooper's works, for the last three or four years, seem to have been written under no higher inspiration than that of spleen. They abound in uncalled-for political disquisitions, filled up with expressions of the bitterest scorn and hatred. They are deformed by perpetual outbreaks of a spirit, which might be expected to show itself in the pages of a ruthless partisan, careless of truth in aiming at the reputation of an opponent whom he wishes to ruin; but from which the writings of the poet and the man of letters, sitting apart, "in the still air of delightful studies," ought to be wholly exempt. He has added nothing to the range of characters in fiction, which amuse and occupy our hours of leisure, and to which the mind returns, as to old familiar scenes, or the faces of friends; he has told no new tale of human passions, for our instruction or warning; but he has given us, both in his books of travels, and his last novel, a few brilliant descriptions of natural scenery, both by land and sea.

"Homeward Bound" is a sort of log-book of a passage from London to New York. We are entertained *ad nauseam*,—until we are absolutely sea-sick,—with the rocking of the packet-ship Montauk, in fair weather and foul. These scenes, wearisome by repetition and prolongation, are diversified but not relieved, by the doings and sayings of a set of passengers, the like of whom, for stupidity and absurdity, could scarcely be gathered together, from the whole circuit of the British dominions and the United States. A couple of more tiresome gen-